

Lake Panorama TIMES

HOME IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

Lake Panorama residents transform their homes and properties into beautiful living spaces.

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Stages of life... and home improvement projects

By **Shane Goodman** | Publisher

Ever notice how your home improvement projects are dictated by your current stage of life? Creating a nursery for a newborn child. Building a children's playhouse in the backyard. Installing a fence to keep that new puppy from running away. Creating the man cave in the basement. Converting the dining room to a home office. Moving your bedroom to the main floor to avoid steps. The list goes on.



Whether you are at the stage of buying or the stage of selling makes a difference, too. When buying a home, there are typically a number of projects you want to work on after you take possession, whether by yourself or through a contractor. Some are focused on immediately. Others take some time. And, for a variety of reasons, some simply never happen.

When selling a home, there are also typically a number of projects you want to work on. These become more urgent, especially when they are a requirement for the sale.

Throw in a derecho or a hail storm or two, and the list keeps piling up.

For most of us, these projects can become all-consuming, and we need help. Despite our best intentions, we have fulltime lives to lead, and some of these home improvement projects (OK, most of them) simply should be completed by professionals.

So regardless of what stage of life you are in right now, you more than likely have a few projects to work on. With that in mind, we are offering examples of what local residents have done to cross these tasks off their lists and enjoy their remodeled homes.

Thanks for reading. ■



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From a 1980s log cabin to a modern home

Out with the old, in with the brand new.

BEFORE



While the Fishers loved their old log cabin, it was time for something brand new.

Deb and Jim Fisher have enjoyed Lake Panorama for more than two decades now and plan to continue doing so for years to come.

That's why they recently underwent a major renovation project at their lake property — a complete rebuild of their home, actually.

Back in 1996, the Fishers purchased a small log cabin that had been built in the early 1980s. They loved how rustic it was and the fact that it had no drywall in it — just logs. Yet, because of the nature of how log cabins were built during that time — without a standard concrete foundation — the Fisher's place started to require more maintenance than they wanted to deal with.

The couple spent 25 years at that log cabin and made countless great memories with family, so choosing to do something completely different on the property was a tough choice to make. Ultimately, though, the thought of having a brand-new home was too enticing to pass up.



The Fisher family enjoys one last gathering at the old cabin in July 2020.

WHOLE HOUSE

AFTER



The Fisher family found it difficult to tear down their old cabin, but their new lake house provides plenty of room for their 20-member family to enjoy the space.

“So, we made the decision to start over,” Deb says.

They decided to have the log cabin torn down and build a home that would fit their growing family better. They’re currently a family of 20, and Jim and Deb actually share ownership of the property with their children.

The construction process started at the end of August last year when the demolition of the log cabin began. The majority of the project wrapped up this past summer. The Fisher family was able to start enjoying their new home on the Fourth of July and finished up minor details in early fall.

The house features four bathrooms and five bedrooms, although there’s much more sleeping space than that. Deb says the home can easily sleep 20 people, especially because they configured the home to hold the whole family and included Murphy beds. It has a main level, a loft and a walk-out basement.

AFTER



WHOLE HOUSE

The large great room on the main floor flows into an open kitchen and dining area, off of which is a large deck that spans the length of the house and overlooks the lake. The deck features remote screens so the family can enjoy the outdoor space without being bothered by bugs. There's a smaller porch on the front side of the house, too.

With all the space, the house is exactly what the Fisher family was looking for.

"Our new home fits the needs of our family a lot better," Deb says.

Deb describes the home's vibe as "cottage-y." She's incorporated lots of antiques throughout the place, many of which are displayed on open shelves. The home also predominately features shiplap on its walls.

"It feels like a lake house, which was real important to me," Deb says. "I didn't want it to feel like your regular house; I wanted it to feel like a lake house, where you're comfortable and you have things there that you don't have everywhere else."

Deb adds that the overall design of the home was done to include as many places for the family to spread out as possible, both inside and out.

"With a larger family, when we're all here, while it's fun to all be together, sometimes people need their own little spot, too," she says.

One of her personal favorite spots is outside.

"The lake-side deck is just fabulous," Deb says. "It's big, and there are lots of places for people to sit.... The spaces that let you be outdoors and enjoy the view of the lake and the feel that you have with the lake house, those are our favorite things."

The Fishers added additional areas to sit outside, including a large patio off the lower level and a spot further down the hill by the lake.

Deb credits Wood Duck Landscapes and Donovan Construction for carrying out the family's vision for their dream lakeside home.

"We're overall just really pleased with the new house. It exceeded our expectations. We loved the log cabin, and it was a hard decision to take it down, so to let go of that and get something that we're happy with was really important to us. We're super happy." ■



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Total backyard update

Lake lot receives landscaping makeover.



One of Todd Carlson's favorite areas is the beach, which he doubled in size.

When Todd Carlson bought a lot on Lake Panorama near Party Cove in 2016, he knew he'd have to get creative with the outdoor space. He had a log home built on the property, and to make the most of the tight yard, he had to have the cabin elevated on the lot.

As a result of that, rock walls had to be installed along each side of the home. The lot had significant water flow over the top of it, so a drainage plan was required to keep water off the property and away from the home.

The work started in January 2016 — some might remember the weather was mild — with large rock retaining walls installed. Carlson also had a firepit area created along with a path that leads from the patio to the firepit and further on down to the water. Around the firepit area, Carlson had plant beds put in. Carlson hired Wood Duck Landscapes for the project.

He says he enjoys both the patio and firepit space, as they both offer ample room to gather with friends and

family and enjoy all that his lake home has to offer.

One of Carlson's other favorite areas is the beach space. About two years ago, he doubled the size of it and installed large metal palm trees — perfect for hanging a hammock and resting among the striking artwork.

Around the yard are lush green plants and eye-catching flowers, taking in mind which kinds of plants will survive on the lake with the deer population. ■

LANDSCAPING



Metal palm trees are perfect when you want to hang a hammock by the beach.



Todd Carlson's lake home offers ample outdoor space where he enjoys gathering with family and friends.



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Big deck offers ample views

The Sissels enjoy being outdoors, so a large deck was a must.

When Scott and Anne Sissel purchased their home on Lake Panorama last fall, they knew they wanted to take advantage of being outdoors and having a gorgeous lake view right in their backyard. The home had an existing deck, but the couple quickly decided they wanted to expand it to make room for additional seating options and an outdoor dining table.

So, the Sissels enlisted the help of Josh Arganbright to redo the deck. They chose to use gray TimberTech composite decking, as it offers a gorgeous finish while being low maintenance. Since the lake home is the Sissels' secondary residence (they primarily live in West Des Moines), they didn't want to have to deal with any upkeep of the deck.



The Sissel family has their dream deck, which features prominently on the lake side of their home.



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DECK



The new deck provides ample space for enjoying the view of Lake Panorama.

The deck boards were installed in a double picture frame fashion, which maximizes the boards and “makes it feel like a really elevated deck with that kind of detail,” Anne says.

As for the railing, Anne knew she wanted to be able to lean against it and set a drink on it. She also desired something that wouldn’t obstruct the view of the lake. She considered glass but was concerned about keeping it clean. She decided on a rail with a cable system option that installs vertically. Most cable railings run horizontally, but because the Sissels have two young boys and family with little ones, they didn’t want the kids to climb on it, making the vertical cables a good option.

“We are very pleased with it,” Anne says. “We think it minimizes the view obstruction.”

The previous homeowners had an under-deck drainage system, which collects the rain-water that falls between the deck boards and moves it into a rain gutter and away from the lower-level patio. The Sissels liked this feature so made sure to include it in their deck renovation. Now, if it’s raining, they can still sit in the area under the deck, where they have a hot tub, without getting wet.



The Sissel family lake home offers gorgeous sunset views.

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So far, the Sissels have added a dining table and Adirondack chairs to their new deck space and hope to add chaise lounge chairs as well, providing numerous seating options for when they entertain.

Because the deck faces west, the Sissels have gorgeous sunset views over the lake. Anne likes being out there in the morning, soaking in the peace and quiet and all that the lake has to offer. She also enjoys the space that their new deck provides.

“Being able to be out at the lake with friends and family and have everyone fit comfortably has been great,” Anne says. ■



An under deck drainage system was installed, meaning the Sissels can enjoy their patio without getting wet even when it's raining.

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Light, bright kitchen

Renovation gives home breath of fresh air.

Scott Johnson and Julia Lawler built their Lake Panorama home 12 years ago, so when they decided to undergo a remodel recently, it was to provide an updated design and color scheme. When Lawler first designed it, she used lots of dark colors. The new palette is much lighter.

The kitchen area especially shows off this new style.

“In the kitchen, going with the lighter cabinetry is probably one of my favorite things, not because I didn’t love the espresso before, but lightening up the whole house with those light floors and cabinetry is my favorite thing,” Lawler says.

The new flooring is a light gray, wood-like tile, which complements the bright white cabinets and silver hardware. Johnson and Lawler also chose a light quartzite countertop and had all the woodwork and trim, which was maple before, painted a creamy white. They did keep their previous appliances, with the exception of a new Wolf oven.



Scott Johnson and Julia Lawler decided on renovations to brighten up their home. The kitchen renovation resulted in a bright and open room that seamlessly transitions to the living area, which was also transformed.

The couple hired Donovan Construction and subcontractors were Cabinets by Design in Grimes and Fox Countertops in Urbandale.

As part of the kitchen remodel, the couple had the attached living room remodeled as well. In addition to the new flooring, painting the walls and having the doors all painted white, they had porcelain tile installed around the fireplace. The half-bath off the kitchen also received some cosmetic updates.

And while the lower level, including the kitchen and living room, looks completely different now, Lawler says some of the more major updates were made upstairs, like the newly configured master bathroom. The top floor remodel process took from fall 2019 to about May 2020, while the lower-level remodel was done in fall 2020.

The large kitchen island provides a comfortable seating area for company when Scott Johnson and Julia Lawler entertain.

KITCHEN



Julia Lawler had lighting included in the new cabinets.



The living room features a massive porcelain tile fireplace area. The darker interior of their home was transformed into a bright area in the Scott Johnson and Julia Lawler home.

KITCHEN

Overall, Lawler, whose background is in investments at Principal Financial Group, is thrilled with the completed look of her and Johnson's lake home. It's much lighter and brighter, and she thoroughly enjoyed designing it.

"I love that part of the process," Lawler says. "I love using the other side of my brain for decorating and picking out colors and cabinetry."

"We just love the lake, so anything we do to our house is great, because we're staying." ■



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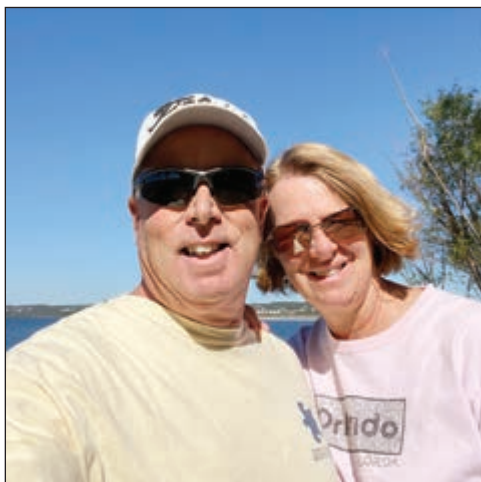
Outdoor transformation

Part of the Redshaws' backyard includes a firepit area for gathering.

From the very beginning, Galen Redshaw knew the lot he and his wife, Carol, purchased on Lake Panorama in 2016 would need stairs installed down the backyard hill in order to improve the access to their dock.

So, when they finally started building their home in fall 2018, they'd had time to brainstorm some landscaping ideas. While the home was under construction, the Redshaws sought an initial quote for the landscaping. However, the couple wanted to wait until the house itself was wrapped up before they tackled their big outdoor project.

That time came about a year ago when they revisited their plan and began to iron out the details they wanted. The real work started this past April and wrapped up in early June.

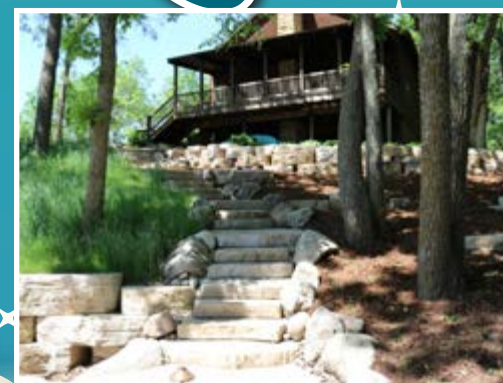


After building their Lake Panorama home, Galen and Carol Redshaw focused on the landscaping to improve access to the dock and to provide outdoor areas for gathering with friends and family.



The Redshaws installed stairs from the house all the way down the hill to improve their access to the dock.

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With a steep incline between the house and dock, the Renshaws wanted steps. They also wanted a fire pit area carved into the hill, which required a lot of dirt being moved.

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GATHERING SPACE



Outdoor lighting enhances the landscape and makes it possible to enjoy time outside into the evening.

Galen and Carol desired a large patio near the house, as well as a second level on the hill for a firepit area. Both of these spaces offer ample room to gather with family and friends while enjoying all their lake home has to offer. The firepit, especially, is one of Galen’s favorite aspects.




The firepit area is one of Galen Redshaw’s favorite aspects of the yard.

“It turned out really well,” he says. “It’s a really nice space for us to gather together as a family. It adds a lot of character to the backyard. It’s visually appealing, too.”

The couple had landscaping lights installed around the

area, which makes the space more visible and aesthetically pleasing.


“At night, it really lights up and looks cool,” Galen says. “It just adds a lot to the neighborhood.”




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GATHERING SPACE

AFTER



Steps were needed to make the jaunt down to the lake more manageable because of the steep grade of the property.

And while the landscaping company, Wood Duck Landscapes, did all the hardscape work, Galen did the planting because it's something he enjoys. He planned what shrubs and perennials he wanted to put in, and the planting became a labor of love.

One aspect of the hardscape that Galen and Carol appreciate is the incorporation of Rosetta stone, which can be difficult to install.

The Redshaws hope to have their Lake Panorama homes for many years, so they wanted to ensure everything about their landscaping project was structurally sound. In the end, they feel it's "worth the healthy investment we made."

"I thought, well, if we're going to be out here for a while, then let's make it now, let's put it in and let's start enjoying the space, building some family memories," Galen says. ■



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